



LIFELINK

NEWSLETTER

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Being There for Others Starts with Being There for Yourself

How many times have you heard a version of the following precaution when preparing for takeoff on a commercial flight?

"In the event that cabin pressure should change, oxygen masks will deploy from the overhead panel....Secure your mask before assisting others."

This statement can be practically applied in daily life, where seemingly predictable routines can be suddenly interrupted by turbulence or a change in course. Those unpredictable moments can test your capacity to maintain balance physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. That's why it is important to build Small ACTs of self-care into your regular routine, enabling you to optimize your health from the inside out while strengthening your abilities to help yourself navigate challenges and be there for others.

Think of self-care as your oxygen mask for everyday life and unpredictable moments alike. It includes basic activities such as eating a balanced diet, attending to medical concerns, getting adequate sleep and exercising regularly, as well as those that can promote positive coping and resilience. Your individual needs are likely different than those of your shipmates, family or friends, and it may take some open-mindedness to determine which self-care practices work best for you. Here are a few Small ACTs of self-care you can try:

Keep a gratitude journal. At the end of each week, take a few moments to reflect and write down three to five things that you are grateful for. Focus more on quality rather than quantity, elaborating on *how* a person, event or thing has made a difference in your life. The University of California Berkeley's "**Greater Good Project**" has a myriad of resources to help you reap the benefits of giving thanks—which include better sleep, improved relationships and reduced symptoms of physical and psychological illness—[here](#).

Set boundaries. Before you reach the point of feeling overloaded with mission demands, family responsibilities and social commitments, consider what you may be able to take off of your plate. Be honest with yourself about what you can reasonably tackle and what's most important. If you are able to say no to doing a last-minute favor or task in order to give yourself time to focus on immediate priorities, give yourself

permission to do so without feeling guilt or regret. You can always help by identifying and directly expressing confidence in another person who has the capability and bandwidth to support the request.

Check in with yourself. Try setting a daily reminder to take a "mindfulness break," helping you focus on the present by non-judgmentally tuning into your breath, body and thoughts. To get started, sit in an upright position with your eyes closed or open, and bring your attention to each inhale and exhale. Whenever the mind wanders, acknowledge your thoughts and then bring your focus back to your breath. If it helps to have a timer, set it for two minutes for your first try and see if you can work your way up from there. You can also download the **T2 Mindfulness Coach** for hands-on guidance. Mindfulness can help you relax, boost your attention span, and promote feelings of well-being¹. Check out this article from **Real Warriors** to learn more.

Similar to securing your oxygen mask first, practicing self-care isn't an act of selfishness. Taking care of yourself emotionally not only improves your personal and professional relationships, but can boost your abilities to be there for others and make a positive contribution to your team.



Pictured: USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) Sailors participate in a sunrise yoga class on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) during 2015 Suicide Prevention Month.

¹Money, N., MD, MPH, ABIHM, Moore, M., PhD, Bates, M., PhD, & Brown, D., PhD. (2011, June). Mind-Body Skills for Regulating the Autonomic Nervous System (Rep.). Retrieved August 28, 2016



Lifelink Spotlight

“I love you too much:” Simple Words that Helped Save a Life

Sheriff's Lt. Albert “Mac” McLendon and Sheriff's Investigator David Goff, deputies of the Richland County, South Carolina Sheriff's Office, embodied what it means to be there and how one small act can make big, life-saving differences.



During a normal shift on July 26th, McLendon found a man sitting on the ledge of a highway overpass, outside of the guardrail crying and explaining on the phone that his family had left him. McLendon leapt into immediate action.

McLendon approached the man, knelt and reached to grab his belt through the guardrail to prevent him from jumping or slipping off the edge. After radioing for back-up, McLendon told the man “just don't [jump]. Come back here and talk a bit. I love you too much.”

It may sound unusual for McLendon to tell a complete stranger that he loved him, but, as McLendon explained, that is what he wanted the man to know immediately. “He's probably thought he's lost everyone at this point, and here's a total stranger, a guy in uniform, a police officer, a deputy sheriff of all things, coming up and telling him he loves him.”

Sheriff's Investigator David Goff responded to the call for backup, and when he arrived on the scene he leaned over the guardrail and helped McLendon pull the man to safety. “I got him to stand up, and when he stood to his feet I just bear-hugged him, where I could hold on to him and just kind of leaned, picked him up and myself and Lt. McLendon pulled him back across onto the sidewalk and I set him down.”

When EMS arrived to take the man to the hospital for observation and treatment, the man initially refused to go, until Goff offered to go with the man and follow the ambulance in his vehicle. When they arrived at the hospital, Goff then walked the man into the emergency room. The small acts of expressing love and continuing to be there saved a life. Bravo Zulu, Lt. McLendon and Sheriff's Investigator Goff whose small acts helped a stranger in his time of need.

Read the full article [here](#).

Plan of the Week Notes

Below are sample Plan of the Week notes aligning with topics covered by the Every Sailor, Every Day campaign during the month of September:

1. September is Suicide Prevention Month. This year, Navy's *Every Sailor, Every Day* campaign is focusing on Small ACTs that Sailors, families and members of the Navy community can practice to be there for themselves and others. Check out the “30 Days of Small ACTs” calendar for simple tools to add to your self-care toolkit: <http://go.usa.gov/xWv7Q>.
2. Put your ideas to be there for yourself and others into practice and share them with your shipmates. Submit a Small ACT Selfie to navysuicideprevention@gmail.com following the guidance and using the signs available here: <http://go.usa.gov/xWdGY>.
3. Did you know? Firearms are the most commonly used and highly lethal method of suicide across military and civilian populations. However, numerous studies indicate that simple precautions can be life saving, such as using a gun lock on your personally owned firearm, storing it in a secured safe, and asking a trusted source to store it for you during periods of increased stress. Practicing means safety can help keep your family safe from accidental injury, and help keep you safe during life's inevitable challenges. For more information, visit www.meansmatter.org.
4. When you learn more about **promoting psychological and emotional well-being**, you can help foster an environment free from the negative attitudes that can be associated with reaching out for help with life's challenges. Military life can put stress on you. But often, some of the most significant stressors are everyday situations like relationship problems or financial strain. When life's challenges become too much to handle and Sailors and Marines feel alone in the challenges they face, some may contemplate suicide. You can help yourself and your peers when you recognize suicide **warning signs** and **risk factors**, and take action to get help or intervene early.

DoD-wide Suicide Prevention Month Outreach Recognition

This year, the Dept. of Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO) will recognize one outstanding installation from each of the services for their efforts in suicide prevention and promotion of community engagement during Suicide Prevention Month. Winners will be honored during a recognition ceremony at the Pentagon. Nomination criteria and additional information can be found on www.dspo.mil.

For engagement ideas, visit the Every Sailor, Every Day “**Get Involved**” page.



News and Resources

1 Small ACT Toolkit
[Issuu](#)

Every Sailor, Every Day Starts
with YOU
[NavyNavStress](#)

Stressed? Time to Self-Check
[VetsSelfCheck.org](#)

Suicide Prevention: Ask, Care,
Treat
[Navy Medicine Live](#)

Healthy Ways for You to
Manage Psychological Health
Symptoms
[Real Warriors](#)

Boost your Fitness with Yoga
[HPRC](#)

Suicide Prevention: It's Up to
All of Us
[Navy.mil](#)

Fatigue: The Big Grey Elephant
in the Room
[NavyNavStress](#)

Breathing, Meditation and
Relaxation Techniques
[Real Warriors](#)

Fall Back Into Health and
Wellness
[Military OneSource](#)

Tools for Parenting After a
Suicide
[Military OneSource](#)

September Health Promotion
and Wellness Toolbox
[NMCPhC](#)

Commanding Officer's Suicide
Prevention Program Handbook
[Issuu](#)

Current and Upcoming Events

**Navy Suicide Prevention
Month**
September

SPC Training Webinars
September 13, 1000 CT
September 29, 1200 CT
[Register Here](#)

Self-Managing Psychological Health Concerns: Work with a Provider for Maximum Benefit

Military service can be challenging at times. These challenges can lead to psychological health concerns such as feeling anxiety, worry, sadness, or having trouble sleeping. It is common for service members to try to manage concerns like these on their own. While you may be trying to self-manage already, remember that you can benefit from the support and advice of your health care provider. It is important to seek care from your provider if:

- Your concerns negatively impact your work or relationships with friends and family and/or;
- **Your concerns last for more than eight weeks.**

If you decide to self-manage, talk with your health care provider about the following techniques that can help during the process:

Create a Self-Management Plan

- Creating a self-management plan with your health care provider can help you stay organized and on track. Try these tips as you self-manage:
- Educate yourself about symptoms using trusted sources, such as from your health care provider or a symptom checker from **Make the Connection**.
- Visit your health care provider on a regular basis to make sure you are making progress.
- Set **realistic expectations** of when your concerns may improve.
- Keep track of your progress and results.
- Reach out to those who may have had similar concerns, such as attending a support group.
- Share your plan with loved ones so they can help support your goals.

Learn to Self-Manage Your Concerns

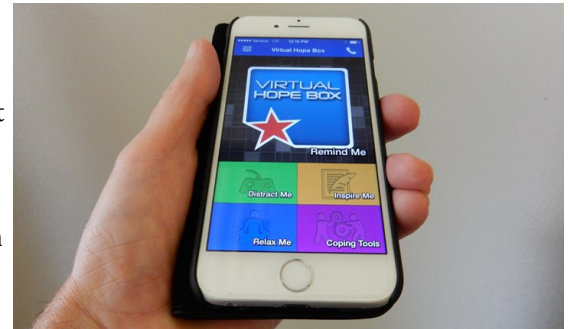
Your provider may offer several techniques to help you manage your concerns. Research shows that the self-management techniques below support your psychological health and improve your well-being. Talk with a provider to see which of these may work best for you:

- Exercise such as running, brisk walking or **tai chi** can **improve sleep, and reduce symptoms of anxiety, anger and depression**.
- Visit your health care provider on a regular basis to make sure you are making progress.
- **Mindfulness meditation** has been shown to **decrease symptoms of anxiety and depression**.
- **Proper sleep habits** play an important role in your overall health and well-being.
- **Relaxation techniques** such as yoga and breathing exercises can help to reduce symptoms of stress such as tension.

Mobile apps can be great tools for helping you self-manage. Use apps to support care and track and share health information with your health care provider. For example, the **Breathe2Relax** app uses proven breathing exercises to relieve stress and improve your mood. The **Mindfulness Coach** app provides you with tools and guided exercises to help you practice mindfulness. For a list of more apps, take a look at the Defense Department's Telehealth and Technology (T2) [website](#).

Self-managing is not a solution for everyone nor every situation, and that is okay. You can also reach out to your local TRICARE facility or healthcare provider for additional resources. Treatment will depend on your specific concerns.

This article was contributed by the Real Warriors Campaign and can be viewed in its original form [here](#).



T2's Virtual Hopebox mobile app is designed for use by those currently working with a health care provider. Click the image for details.